



Paul Azevedo

The Reactor

Until 1769 the only people who affected the space that is now Pacifica were aboriginals, people we sometimes call Ohlones or Costanonans. As far as we know, these people and their ancestors had lived here for thousands of years. Perhaps two thousand, perhaps four thousand, perhaps 30,000 years. No one really knows.

In 1769 the Spanish and Mexicans came to discover a bay the Ohlones knew was there all the time. Before one of the Ohlone babies of 1769 could live out a long lifetime, assuming any were allowed to do so, the area had changed drastically.

The Ohlone groomed the hills with fire, which kept the brush down and the deer population in good shape. The Spanish brought in cattle, which cropped the grasses, fattened up the grizzly bear population, provided hides for trade, and eroded the hills.

When the Americans (many of them actually European Immigrants) succeeded to the lands, replacing the Mexicans who had replaced the Spanish who had replaced the Ohlone, the grizzly bears were exterminated, the Spanish cattle were replaced by fancy dairy breeds, and the native grasses were replaced with European weeds and European grasses.

At first there were no trees. The coastal hills and valleys were barren, covered with brush or grass. Today there are thousands and thousands of trees in Pacifica, probably more trees than people.

A couple of thousand were planted in the last two or three years by public service organizations like the Boy Scouts and the Terra Nova and Oceana Bands, each one in the name of a new subscriber to the Tribune, in a triple play that has brought the Tribune new readers, worthy organizations needed income, and the city of Pacifica trees which, as John McLaren's father said, said, "will grow while ye' sleep."

Of all the people who have affected the physical environment of Pacifica, John McLaren may have done the most.

McLaren was the Superintendent of Golden Gate Park and there he planted thousands of trees. He is responsible for many thousands more on the Bay side.

In Pacifica he planted many trees in the area that is now Sharp Park golf course and probably elsewhere.

He started on that project in 1916, even before the property was fully in the hands of the city of San Francisco.